

Kyodan

Kyodan News Letter

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WILL WE HEAR THIS CRY OF AGONY?

"A voice was heard in Rama, wailing and loud laments; it was Rachel, weeping for her children, and refusing all consolation, because they were no more." (Matthew 2:18)

The war in Vietnam has become exceedingly cruel.

It is reported that the number of children who have been killed and wounded by napalm bombs and incendiary bombs exceeds one million. The wounded Americans are cared for with unbelievable swiftness and efficiency, while the extent of the sufferings and sorrows of the Vietnamese are known to the whole world.

Is this guarding freedom?

Is this resisting Communism?

"We pray that the religious conscience will guide humanity to stop a war that has reached its utmost in atrocity."

This is not the prayer of a Christian but the prayer offered by two Buddhists, Thich Tri Quang and Thich Qung Do, in a statement made last February 18.

From the side of Christians, when Cardinal Spellman visited Vietnam last year and said, "This is a war to preserve civilization, and we must have a complete military victory," he shocked the world.

As for the Vietnam Peace March in Washington in November, 1965, Billy Graham coldly criticized it as a disturbance aimed at getting nation-wide attention. By this, he indirectly gave support to the Vietnam policy of President Johnson, and he put conservative Christians at ease.

However, as far as we can discern, there are few Japanese who can agree with Christian words and actions of that kind. On the contrary, there is sympathy only for those Americans who are working to stop the war in Vietnam, and it is for their success that we pray.

The picture of America that comes to our eyes is one of a country trying to maintain her influence in Asia by military force. America's actions today are not those of moral persuasion.

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Consequently, we do not think that America can gain a real victory in this war through military effort. In any war that people cannot sincerely support from a moral standpoint, even if a military victory is won, it is a loathsome, empty victory.

In this war there can be no honorable victory. There have been too many innocent women, old people, and women who have been humiliated, injured, and killed.

The point is not our own reputation; rather it is, how long can we close our ears to this cry of agony?

ELECTION OF A TOKYO GOVERNOR

April 15 was the day for the general elections of governors in the various districts of Japan. One of the highlights was the election of the new Tokyo governor. The victor is Professor Ryokichi Minobe, a Tokyo university professor who was backed by the Japan Socialist Party and the Japan Communist Party. Minobe defeated the favorite, Dr. Masatoshi Matsushita, president of St. Paul's University, an Anglican Episcopal Church-related school. Matsushita was sponsored by the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party and by the Democratic Socialist Party.

Minobe, although the underdog, gained a most impressive victory. The reasons for his election are generally analyzed as:

1. The people felt that for the past 20 years the incumbent party has been too easy-going and has had no real drive for a forward-looking program. The incumbents have also suffered several cases of so-called corruption.
2. The voters have been dissatisfied about rising prices, housing, roads, and public nuisances.
3. The Socialist and Communist parties, in order to build a definite policy for the metropolitan area, have enlisted scholars, cultural leaders, housewives, and labor leaders.
4. Minobe is personally attractive to the people, especially because of his personal integrity and because of the popularity of his father, as a result of his work for the democratic growth of Japan.

In general, the attitude of the Christian Church toward the election was divided. Mr. Matsushita, being a Christian, received support from some Christians on the basis of this fact. Other Christians, including Kyodan Moderator Suzuki, NCC Moderator Omura and Tokyo Union Theological Seminary President Takasaki, departed from the expected position of Christians supporting a Christian and formed a committee supporting Minobe, which asked Christians in the Tokyo metropolitan area to vote for Minobe.

Another group of Christians, however, led by former Kyodan Moderator Kozaki and former Japan Bible Society General Secretary Miyakoda formed a group backing Matsushita.

Thus, one result of the election has been to reveal a sharp division within the Christian community. As we draw nearer to 1970, the year for the renewal of the United States-Japan Mutual Security Pact, this division is expected to become sharper and clearer.

OKINAWA-JAPAN CHURCH UNION

As reported previously, The United Church of Christ in Okinawa and The United Church of Christ in Japan have both agreed to union and have begun to study the mechanics necessary to bring about this union. The target date is the General Assembly of the Japanese Kyodan in the fall of 1968.

In both Okinawa and Japan, there is great anticipation for this projected plan. There are problems involved--Okinawa is still occupied by the American Military and is seeking an early return to Japan; Okinawa uses United States currency and the United States postal system; a visa is still needed for travel between Okinawa and Japan.

Could it be that this union of the two churches will be the pace-setting action for resolving some of Okinawa's problems in the near future?

OSAKA PRAYER BAND

Ten years ago in Osaka the Breakfast Prayer Group was organized. The purpose was simply for lay people to gather for prayer, fellowship, and breakfast each Monday morning, from 7:00 to 8:00. Fifteen minutes are spent in Bible reading, the singing of hymns, and words of encouragement from a layman. Another fifteen minutes are then spent in personal and corporate prayer. The breakfast hour follows. Undergirded with this power, each person then goes to witness with his life in his work situation.

This is a lay movement; it is interdenominational; it is meeting an urgent need in the life of lay people.

From Osaka, this program has spread until now there are similar prayer groups in fifty cities, from Hokkaido to Okinawa. While these groups are related to one another, each group gears its program to the local situation.

We have hopes and expectations that great lay work in Japan will come from these prayer groups.

